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The ivory tower of campus life

by Justine Schmiesing

When my mother was in college she was a commuter who went full-time—six classes each semester. It was a three mile walk each way, everyday. My mother also held a full-time job and when she came home was still able to find time to be a participating member of the large family she belonged to—doing chores and helping with the little ones. I can quite easily call up these facts, since they are engraved in the inside of my skull, worn into the bone from years of echoing and re-echoing in my ears. A little to the right of these words is the phrase: “You college students are living in an ivory tower.” Quite

understandably, her experience has left her with little sympathy for the woes of the cushioned on-campus student.

Since her college days, my mother has married and lovingly born 10 children, nine of them after me. The oldest four have attended Franciscan Univer-

sity, and all of us have lived in the dorms.¹

And all of us have had to endure the regularly recurring post-dorm life deprogramming lectures from Mother.

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Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break and summer vacation are now designated “re-orientation” times for college students in the Franzonello household. They are a time for getting back into the swing of family life—the pressures of which we never felt in the dorm. True, dorms have households, Advent Angels, *Fove* and *Communio*—but they could never take the place of doing dishes, folding mountainous loads of family laundry or changing a really disgusting diaper.

“You are not a guest in this house! You must be a participating family member,” my mother would bark in a voice that stopped our eyes mid-roll when we got assigned a chore we deemed too bourgeois for our elevated status as college students. We were no longer in the soft safe-haven of

the dorm.

As my mother saw it, the come-and-go-as-I-please habit was a particularly odious beast adopted at school. She demanded it be destroyed the first time it reared its ugly self-righteous head in each successive freshman. Lurking in the depths, it generally waited to surface until after the first Thanksgiving-break get-together with the high school buddies. Mine was mortally wounded at 2:00 a.m. one snowy morning. My father struck it down on the porch—even before it got to the front door; I dragged my wounded monster to bed, then Mother killed it before breakfast. “You are not a guest in this house!” she thundered. “You must live by our rules—and curfews. You cannot stay out all night and then sleep in all morning. You must be a participating family member!”

I must submit this piece to my mother for approval before it is printed anywhere public, since I have word-processed a rather harsh picture of her—but solely for dramatic effect. However her tone is remembered, her point rings clear and true: many college students live in an ivory tower. Residing in the dorm, going to class, playing sports, and possibly working a few hours in the mailroom do not a well-rounded person make. Looking over the tower gate one could generalize: “What a life—no rules, no responsibly—*Hakuna Matata!*”

I know well the struggles of the collegiate, having been ploughed over by
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CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS



Elizabeth Magaletta replies to Michael Healy on feminism

Michael Healy's disagreement with my argument has, as it seems to me, two roots: he does not perceive that masculinism confers on men more than ego benefits, nor that all men benefit from living in a masculinist culture, regardless of whether they are themselves guilty of chauvinistic attitudes. But they do; and so it cannot be claimed that women need defense only from "certain" men and that feminism is therefore unnecessary.

For example: if I live in a society in which the laws against domestic violence are spottily and reluctantly enforced, I can, regardless of whether he actually beats me, be said to lack protection from my husband. Now a neutralist such as Healy might here point out that, if my husband is not a batterer,

I don't need such protection. But whether he is a batterer or not is beyond my control. By failing to effectively or consistently punish wife-beating, society has left the decision of whether to beat me up to my husband. I am at his mercy. This is not to belittle the goodwill of men who would never do such a thing, but only to note that for society to leave women to rely, individually, on such goodwill, means putting them in an unacceptable state of helpless dependence. All women, therefore, need protection from all men. We must always be on our guard, because the level of protection extended to women at any given time is contingent on a wide and dynamic range of social and political factors. The name for this rationally vigilant stance is feminism.

It might seem that we are now far afield from the points I brought in my original essay. But think of what the social factors might be, which would prevent society from protecting women from oppression. Surely the prevalence of what I have called "masculinism" would be close to the top of the list. I do not accuse masculinists of wishing to deny women protection from oppression and abuse; but if woman is found inferior, or if her worth is somehow relativized to man's, her claim to such protection is lessened considerably. The problem, then, is not simply one of "insulting" or "denigrating" one or the other sex—of hurting people's feelings—but rather one of human rights and

civil liberties.

Healy notes, though, that some feminists insult and denigrate men. Granted. But these attacks generally stay on the level of middle-class Western academic or political discourse, whereas for millennia masculinist "insults" have been the ideological foundation of systems in which women are disenfranchised, denied education, raped, enslaved, tortured, forcibly sterilized, starved, mutilated, imprisoned, beaten and killed. One major source of resistance to feminism is that many people, although shocked at these injustices, perpetrated against women by men, do not see that they are all, to a greater or lesser degree, perpetrated against women *considered as women*. My statement that all women need protection from all men does not mean that every man is the kind of man from whom all women need protection; it does mean that every woman needs protection from that kind of man. Feminism works to change both laws and attitudes and thereby to keep women secure in their rights. It also, quite naturally, participates in the debate as to what kinds of things are oppressive of women. The range of answers given to this question sometimes runs to extremes. These extremes do not invalidate feminism as such.

Elizabeth Magaletta
Junior, classics and philosophy

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We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of the University and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words. Articles must be in no later than 5:00 pm Wednesday of the week prior to publication.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to *The University Concourse*, Box 27, University Boulevard, Steubenville, OH 43952, or sent to e-mail address: "UConcourse@aol.com"

Please include your full name, phone-number and e-mail address, if you have one.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name; however, in general we wish to encourage open, "face to face" discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

Capitalism re-clarified, from a different perspective

I read Regina Schmiedicke's Issue 3 article on capitalism and agree with some of her statements but not all of them. I also read the counter articles by alumna Martha Blandford and by Michael Welker, who teaches in the economic department at Franciscan University. With all due respect to my colleague and Mrs. Blandford I feel the need to respond to their articles.

Let me begin with Mrs. Blandford's. In disputing Regina's critique of capitalism, she states that "true capitalism has never existed; the closest to it was the U.S. economy before the turn of the century. History notes that social and technological progress was unprecedented during that time." This may be true, but exploitation of the newly arriving southern, central and eastern Europeans was perhaps at its peak as well. Parrillo (1990) in his book *Strangers to These Shores* writes: "At that time [the 19th century] the worker had no voice in working conditions...the fourteen-hour day, six days a week for low wages was common. There were no vacations, sick pay, or pension plans. Child labor was a norm...there was no workers' compensation if, as was likely, someone was injured on the job. A worker who objected was likely to be fired and blacklisted." If this was the great period of true capitalism then I certainly hope we do not achieve it again.

Mrs. Blandford also states that the "truth about its [capitalism's] nature... has been drowned in a wave of misrepresentations, distortions, falsifications and almost universal ignorance." The acceptance of such a statement often depends on where one is located within a stratified system.

It is certainly not a lie that the richest 20% in the U.S. own or control 80% of the country's wealth. Wealth is defined as that total amount of money and valuable goods that a person or family controls—including stocks, bonds and real estate. The poorest 20% own or

control 1% of the wealth in the U.S. The top 20% of families with the highest earnings (\$64,000 plus) receive 44.6% of all income, while the bottom 20% receive only about 4.4 percent. Income is defined as occupational wages or salaries and earnings from investments (Macionis, 1995 source).

The point is, if one is in the top 20% one might say the system is fair, non-exploitive, and morally correct. If one is in the bottom 20% or even in the second 20%, which only owns or controls 15% of the nation's wealth, one might have a different view of the system. One could have a different point of view and not be universally ignorant; one might understand economic theory very well.

What emerges from the facts is that most systems, economic or otherwise, need checks and balances. Sometimes the check on a free-market economy or a "true capitalistic" system is a government consisting of elected officials who have a moral concern for all people within the system. This does not mean the government is without flaw. All systems, because they consist of human beings, have the potential for exploitation.

Now to address Prof. Welker and his criticisms of Regina Schmiedicke's article on capitalism. He states that "the best method is to start at the bottom...that is, at the level of moral persuasion, education on economic literacy and our Christian heritage, and personal conversion." I agree with this statement in principle; unfortunately many people—from the top to the bottom—have not arrived at this state of being.

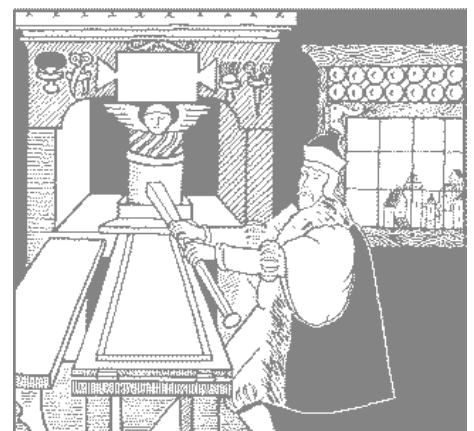
To simply expect corporations to take care of their workers out of some great moral concern has not worked in the past, nor do I think we can expect a change of heart in the near future. Therefore, the masses of people have a moral right to expect and persuade the government to intervene on their behalf: to help them obtain a just wage; to help them obtain a 40-hour work week; to help them get access to supplemental pension plans like social security; to help them get medical insurance; and to help them when corporations downsize to enhance their profit or pay a lower wage in an-

other country.

Prof. Welker also quotes Hayek who writes, "workers under capitalism, despite hardships of factory life, were better off financially and had better lives than prior to the spread of capitalism." This is probably true, but it does not justify any exploitation by corporations operating within a capitalistic system. A similar argument was made by many southern plantation owners concerning slavery. They argued, as did some southern white ministers, that slavery was an essential part of a great economic system, and that African Americans benefited from that system. Easy to say for those who are not the slaves.

I would like to end with a number of quotes from various Popes. First, Pope Leo XIII, who said: "let workers and employers...make any bargains they like and in particular agree freely about wages; nevertheless, there underlies a requirement of natural justice higher and older than any bargain voluntarily struck; the wage ought not to be in any way insufficient...If...a worker is forced to accept harder conditions imposed by an employer or contractor, he is a victim of violence against which justice cries out."

As history shows, the natural checks and balances of the marketplace are not enough to protect individual human beings from injustice. The government, at times, should and must intervene. Pope John XXIII states, "the remuneration of work is not something that could be left to the laws of the marketplace...It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity which require that workers must be paid a wage that allows them



to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations.”

Finally, Pope John Paul II stated, “the more that individuals are defenseless...the more they require the care and concern of others, and in particular the intervention of governmental authority.”

Thomas E. Graham, Ph.D.

Dr. Graham is Associate Professor of Sociology/Social Work at FUS, and is certified to teach economics in the state of Ohio.

Regina Schmiedicke defends the third way

The responses in Issue 5 to my Issue 3 article criticizing the excesses of capitalism and proposing that distributism offers a “more Catholic” alternative have made me realize that I need to explain more fully what distributism means. For instance, both Michael Welker and Martha Blandford have virtually identified it with Marxism, which it is not.

The name “distributism” is perhaps misleading. It was coined by a group of thinkers in England around the turn of the century who proposed that the government help bring about an economic recovery for the nation by passing a bill making it financially feasible for owners of large plots of land to sell them off in smaller parcels to individual families, to allow people from the underclass to become self-sufficient. In other words, distributists were calling for a *voluntary* distribution of land and resources, with no government coercion, just government incentives. This is nothing like communism. Bear in mind, too, that England was then still pretty much ordered according to the landowners and serfs of feudal times. Thinkers pushing to “democratize” English society recognized that political rights for the underclass would mean nothing without corresponding economic rights.

But I suppose if someone is not aware of the historical context, the term

“distributism” might suggest the idea of government forcibly “re-distributing” resources, as the Marxists and welfare-state bureaucrats envision. It apparently did to Mrs. Blandford, since she reads government coercion into my proposals for subsidiarity, although I said nothing of the sort.

Government action is certainly not the only way social change can be brought about. In fact, I would argue that although a government might attempt to bring about a distributist-type society by law, such a society would be both unjust and unstable. In order to last, a distributist society *must* be built from the ground up—by individuals, families and businesses deciding to live out distributive principles and conducting their business accordingly. I would add here that trying to live out distributism generally involves some type of simplification of lifestyle—really, a conversion of heart away from materialism and profit motives.

Should society decide to adopt distributism, there are ways to maintain it that do not involve the government at all. Consider the medieval guilds. They were run by the business owners themselves, who set standards of quality, arranged for fair prices, and initiated apprentices into the trade through a system of training and promotion that allowed opportunities for anyone who was willing to make something of himself. The guilds protected the individual owner’s freedom and dignity by allowing him to exercise his ability to work, to create, and to build within parameters that not only set limits on individual avarice but fostered solidarity among would-be competitors. The guilds were famous for their town entertainments and parties, which were organized by all the members. As the economic foundation of the society, they accomplished their purpose admirably.

Today, guilds exist in a modified form under the name “occupational groups” in some locations. Papal encyclicals have repeatedly called for the revival of occupational groups as a way for individuals to achieve social justice in a marketplace that favors giantism.

If we were to look beyond trade groups and guilds, there is room for government legislation to encourage distributism. For example, the state government could decide to set a tax on chains—a business that owned only one store would be given a tax break, where businesses that had several stores would be taxed accordingly, making megachains financially punitive. The same could be done with huge agribusinesses, to make the family farm a financially viable venture once more. These sorts of laws might hamper the “liberty” of big business, but they would undoubtedly enhance the freedom of the community to live more personally and wholesomely.

But we need not wait for legislation to start living more “distributively” ourselves, that is, in ways that I think reflect our Faith and our humanity more perfectly than our unquestioning participation in the market-at-large does.

I already mentioned patronizing local businesses, which not only give more money back to the community than outsider-owned chains, but are more susceptible to local influence. For example, it would probably be easier to get the locally-owned pharmacy to stop selling Playboy than the nearest Stop n’ Go. A good rule is to avoid malls whenever possible. Malls impoverish the downtown areas of cities, which have been the traditional havens of individual owners and new businesses. The effect of the Fort Steuben mall on the downtown area is obvious to anyone who has driven through Steubenville.

I realize that, for most of us, finding a low price on an item we need tends to take priority over where it comes from. And it’s generally true (but not always true!) that prices in chain stores are lower. But the short-term benefits are miniscule compared with the long-term effects on the consumer and the economy. Wal-Mart has been praised as a “moral” and “family-friendly” company. However, the company has become notorious for its predatory underpricing. When it moves into an area, it deliberately underprices many of its goods (it can afford to), which forces the

local auto parts stores, clothing stores, pharmacies, bookstores, and so on, to lower their prices, which few of them can afford to do. People (including sometimes, I admit, myself) flock to Wal-Mart to find good deals. It's tempting to buy cheap. But when Wal-Mart has put all the competition out of business, will it remain so cheap—or so moral?

I hate to sound ominous, but the situation is rapidly getting desperate and very few people apparently see where thoughtless consumerism and praise of capitalism is leading our nation's economy, never mind our culture. If indeed we do experience the economic collapse many think likely, will McDonalds, Wal-Mart, Lowe's, IBM, AT&T, Lockheed Martin and the other monster corporations be able to salvage the families of all their employees? I harbor serious doubts. Many of them can't keep their workers employed now.

It's become almost a matter of principle to search out local farmers and buy our produce direct, to dine at the local restaurants, or only buy handmade toys from small catalog companies or craft fairs—more expensive than ToysRus, but worth the price! There are fewer unpleasant encounters with crass advertising, less canned music, more friendly exchanges with owners.

If we as Catholics value opportunity, if we value a diverse and rich marketplace, if we value our families and a family-centered culture, then we should work towards family-centered economics. It only makes sense.

Regina (Doman) Schmiedicke
Class of '92

A reply on repentance

I would like to thank David Bradshaw for his thoughtful criticisms of my article on corporate repentance, and especially for the Orthodox perspective he brings to the discussion, which helps me to further nuance and support

my claims.

Mr. Bradshaw rightly points out that repentance (*metanoia*, change of mind) is more than a matter of expressing regret or sorrow for sin. It also includes as one of its essential components a turning away from sin toward God—something which demands much more humility and self-denial. I heartily agree. But this act of turning and casting oneself on God's mercy, while it is primordially personal, nevertheless can and should have a corporate dimension just as sin has a corporate dimension.

Jesus himself spoke in terms of this social aspect of sin when he said, "an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign" and "the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, will be required of this generation." John the Baptist's ministry was to initiate repentance on both an individual and a national level, to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

This act of turning is precisely what characterized the prayers of Daniel and Nehemiah. They might be called prayers of intercessory repentance: a spokesman acknowledges the people's sin (including his own part in it, however small), expresses a resolve (both his own and the people's) to turn away from sin, and implores God's mercy. One of the most potent aspects of such prayer is its ability to shed light on one's own hidden complicity in the sinful attitudes that give rise to the sin itself. For instance, if I fervently pray in intercessory repentance for the sin of contraception, even if I have never committed that sin, I might begin to recognize my own devaluing of human life, self-centered attitudes toward sexuality, disrespect for God's order, etc. But even more, *any sins at all* which I have committed have contributed (in however minute a way) to the societal situation in which such a sin is possible. My failure to love has affected others, who have affected others in turn, in a ripple effect which gets continuously broader as it gets less intense. Repentance and divine forgiveness re-

verse the ripple.*

The ramifications of solidarity are felt even in natural human relations: insofar as an individual identifies himself with a group, he takes on in a certain way both the collective merits and the collective culpabilities of that group. Otherwise there is no way to make sense of such things as the "national apologies" which Japan and Germany have recently made for the crimes of World War II—crimes committed by the parents and grandparents of the present generation. All the more do those in the Church, who are incorporated into her through a living spiritual union, inherit both the merits and sins of their elders in the faith.

Must the corporate repentance the Pope is calling for be completely unanimous in order to be valid? Surely the obstinacy of some does not annul the good act of the rest—if anything, the reverse is true (recall Abraham's plea with God to spare Sodom for the sake of a few righteous men). In a Church of 1 billion-plus members it is unlikely that we will ever see anything like unanimity on earth. The Church will always contain saints and sinners and a large crowd in between. Yet the spiritual unity of the Church allows the actions of a part to affect the whole.

Regarding the vital issue of unity between the Church of East and West: it may be true, as Mr. Bradshaw maintained, that past atrocities have little bearing on the estrangement of the present (although they may have more than he realizes—historical memory can be both subtle and powerful). But even if they had caused no estrangement at all, there would still be a need to corporately repent for them, to do what our ancestors could or would not do: consciously acknowledge the evil for what it was, be sorry for it, turn away from it, resolve never to repeat it. Apart from this the evil perpetrated remains in a certain way "at large" in the world. Visible acts of reform are, of course, desperately needed as well. But any corporate reforms without the interior change of heart and horror of sin that corporate repentance brings would be a mere

face-lift.

More importantly, granted that all the problems Mr. Bradshaw mentions—and many more—are present in the Catholic Church, why should we not want to tackle these problems *together*? Faithful Catholics can empathize wholeheartedly with his consternation over the scandalous problems in the Church. As he is aware, one could just as easily list grave problems present in the Orthodox churches: lack of doc-

trinal and ecclesial unity, secularism (especially in the Orthodox communities of the West), inadequate formation of the clergy (especially in the East), inability to adapt to circumstances, to name a few. When has the Church not had to deal with problems of one kind or another? They do not lessen that fact that the Church is the body of Christ and that our unity is *directly willed* by him. The answer, then, is not to entrench ourselves against one another but to

come closer together in humility and cooperation, seeking to benefit from each other's strengths in renewing the Church.

Mary Healy
MA class of '89

* I am indebted for some of these insights to Dr. John Crosby, who explores this theme from a philosophical perspective in his article, "Max Scheler's Principle of Moral and Religious Solidarity," forthcoming in *Communio*.

The Ivory Tower

Continued from page 1

them myself. But the challenges of life since often make me long to live again in a cute little room which requires very little cleaning, shower in a bathroom I don't have to clean at all, eat food that I don't have to shop for, prepare or put away afterwards, and spend my days pursuing knowledge or pleasure. To me the idea of having even one whole hour, never mind countless hours together, to do nothing but read, write and study is an almost unimaginable luxury! What freedom not to have children to bathe, floors to mop, yards to mow, walls to paint, or electric, gas, water and grocery bills to pay! What great shape I would be in if I could walk into the fieldhouse at whim, flash my student ID, and stay 'till—whenever! The social life I could have, and no babysitters to pay for!² The only improvement I could wish for in this scenario would be to have it set in a 14th century Carthusian monastery in a picturesque Austrian village.

Beholden to none. I would greatly enjoy living that way once again. The ivory tower appeals powerfully to me, but I am afraid a prolonged stay would prove quite dangerous to my soul. I could easily become selfish having no one but myself to take care of day in and day out.

I might be tempted to whine about assignments, tests and papers as cruel and unusual tortures inflicted by unrelenting professors—forgetting I had voluntarily paid the tuition to go to class, or that someone else had sacrificed much for me to be educated. Nestled comfortably in a small campus might desensitize me to my father's forty-minute drive to work and transform the short walk to the classrooms into the Trail of Tears. I might break down and cry in the cafeteria food line, not seeing just the right thing to satisfy my sensitive stomach, because I didn't remember that Mother made only one thing for dinner each night—and I ate it whether I liked it or not.

"Get out of my way—I am the most special, most important person on the planet and I suffer greatly!"

This attitude is almost impossible to maintain if you are a truly participating member of a family. In order to survive (at least in my family) you must acknowledge that there are others whose needs must be met also, often before your own. Counselling peers on relationships and study habits is very worthwhile, but you are more in touch with the "real world" when you are serving people of all ages, often in very tedious, mundane ways, as you do in family life. You are often called to service deeper than lending a formal dress to a girlfriend in dire need, or spotting someone 50¢ at the coffeshop. We must nourish the homes which, filled with strong, healthy families, will breathe life back into this withering nation—something that buildings packed with self-centered individuals can never accomplish.

I don't mean to put down those liv-

ing in the dorms here or on any college campus. I hope my humor has not been misconstrued as cynicism. I do not believe that Franciscan University's residence halls are overflowing with insensitive souls; I know that many participate in various works of mercy and other outreaches, and pray fast and furiously for others. However, I do think it is important for students to be aware of the moral perils involved in their artificial, sheltered setting.

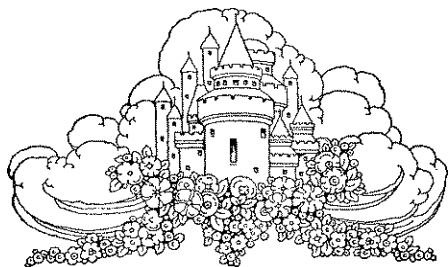
Enjoy it, but do not abuse it, and do not become dependent on it. It is a fun, unique time in your life, but be sure to put it in perspective. Do not float so high in the academic ether that you will disintegrate when your body enters the post-graduation gravitational pull. Be prepared to be a participating member of your current families, future families and the family of society. You will be evicted from your ivory tower soon enough, and you must be packed and ready to go. Also, I felt it my duty to forewarn you in case you ever happened to visit my mother on your Christmas break.³ ■

Justine Schmiesing, Concourse Design Editor, graduated from FUS in 1993.

¹ I believe the current politically correct phrase at the University is now "residence hall," but since I am no longer a student I will flaunt my poetic license at any who admonish me.

² Because I have relatives on campus I must openly confess that I rarely spend money on babysitters if they are family. However, I do let them do their laundry and also offer food in exchange for services.

³ Mother, if you can't write humorously about your own upbringing, you might as well not write at all.



Can E.T.'s be?

Do they fit in with the O.T. and the N.T.?

by John R. Holmes, Ph.D.

THE FIRST TIME I TAUGHT SCIENCE FICTION AT FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY (A DECADE AGO), A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT

TIMIDLY, YET BLUNTLY, ASKED me: "Is science fiction pagan?" I was so stunned by the question that I don't think I gave a very good answer, but it boiled down to "No." I was not convincing. The student did not take the course.

But what could he have meant? I think that an inkling of the orthodox Catholic's difficulty with science fiction can be gained from Justine Schmiesing's delightful essay, in the November 20 *Concourse*, on the doctrinal implications of life on other planets. My response here is offered not so much as a rebuttal to one of my favorite students, but as a plea to the readers of the *Concourse* to take this question seriously, for it has implications for Catholic attitudes not only toward science, but also toward science fiction.

First off, as a gesture of good will, I am going to offer Mrs. Schmiesing some heavy ammunition for her argument. In fact, I was surprised at its absence in her essay: it is often the first scriptural reference in this debate among Christian science-fiction fans. It is the elementary truth that God made us in his own image and likeness. It is implied by her reflections on the incarnation, but let's consider the E.T. implications of this specific phrase: the image and likeness of God. Wouldn't it privilege us (if I may, with the deconstructionists, verbize a noun) over any alien life form in the same way we are privileged over all earth life forms?

Actually, the deepening of our understanding of the Genesis phrase "dominion" in recent years, especially in the current pontificate, may offer an analogy to the other-worlds problem.



For doctrine, as Newman pointed out, can develop without contradicting itself. Christianity itself is the result of such development, such widening of the understanding of earlier scripture and revelation. I pray that this discussion might prepare us intellectually, spiritually and theologically for a similar widening if we ever discover what I believe to be compatible with both scripture and Catholic tradition—intelligent life beyond earth.

The change in understanding of "dominion" is profound: it had often been mistakenly taken to mean "domination"—an assumption that other creatures exist only to serve us. This is a half-truth: while we are the pinnacle of creation, too selfish an understanding of our dominion can blind us to the dignity of all creatures in themselves. If you're wondering where I'm getting this dangerously ecological language, it is from the Holy Father's Peace Day message for 1990, "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with Creatures."

So, if our understanding of so standard a scriptural term as "dominion" can grow and deepen, the same might happen to our understanding of our unique place in creation regarding life (if any) "in space." I would rather not wait until the saucers land to study this question, either.

I'll place the E.T. problem in a scenario least friendly to my position: an intelligent alien race is discovered which bears virtually no physical resemblance to us—picture them however you will. Yet they have art, poetry, love—all of the things we associate with "spirit" outside of the theological sense of the term. Can we assume these creatures have souls, and therefore are worthy of evangelization? Well, confronted by the phrase "image and likeness," we might at first have to say, "no." But what do we mean by "image"? Do we mean exclusively the physical image: head, torso, limbs and organs, as articulated in the people we know? If we mean that exclusively, then the single cell of a newly-fertilized human zygote is not fully human, does not bear the image and likeness of God. I have heard precisely that argument proposed, but somehow it did not ring true to me. Similarly, the "likeness" does not exclusively apply to physical likeness, though here we're on safer ground, as Augustine distinguished the two words, suggesting that our "likeness" to God was broken by the sin of our first parents.

But if I am not granted the premise that "image and likeness" need not be physically literal—and I welcome theological correction here, as I am simply ignorant on this score—let's pursue the

same scenario with the assumption that only earthlings are made in God's image. Does that preclude the E.T.s' hope for eternal life and their need for evangelization? Again, salvation history parallels this scene: The O.T. covenant was very narrow, restricted to the Chosen People of God. The N.T. covenant went beyond the tribes of Israel, to all nations, and we are urged to bring the good news to them all. Is an E.T. covenant possible?

The same question was asked after the discovery of the Western Hemisphere. And here is where I respond to another aspect of Mrs. Schmiesing's presentation: the argument from silence. Just as Scripture and tradition are silent on the issue of other worlds, they are silent on the existence of North and South America. And after 1492 there was much theological discussion of whether the natives of North America had souls and were therefore worthy of evangelization. Our question of whether E.T. had a soul might in the future look as silly as the question of Squanto or Massasoit having a soul looks today.

As for the real existence of Tolkien's Middle Earth, and working out the Christological implications of C.S. Lewis' Narnia, Mrs. Schmiesing is quite right: it "doesn't work." That is, it doesn't work on the literal level. But neither, for Catholic doctrine, does that great work of imaginative truth we call "Genesis."

The reason a liberal arts education includes theology and literature (and, I suspect, one reason that Mrs. S. was an English major), is that literature uses images (there's that word again) to

draw our mind out of the literalness of reason, as Keats puts it, to "tease our mind out of thought." So, although the lion Aslan can help the young mind understand something of the majesty of Christ, still we certainly can't take his existence literally. If we did, how could Jesus be both the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah? There are, however, some images that Catholics *do* take literally where other Christians do not, such as a rewording of the preceding question: how can Jesus be both bread and flesh? But even there, the transcendent reality of transubstantiation teases us out of thought, or at least of the resources of language.

Before leaving C.S. Lewis, however, it ought to be said that he gave us other works of fiction that deal more directly with this problem of intelligent life on other worlds: the so-called "space trilogy" of novels: *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. In these novels we are presented with civilizations on both Mars and Venus which do not have our scriptures, but which do have a revelation from God which precisely corresponds with our own, and do share our salvation history: Mars has an older culture which never fell to temptation, and Venus a younger which has not yet been tempted.

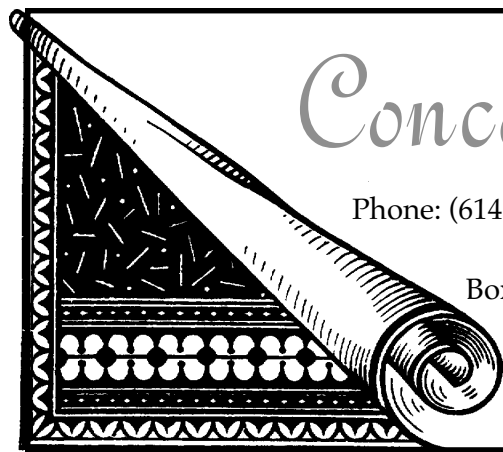
I will close with two thoughts that I can't develop fully in this space, for future discussion. One is a way to connect this issue with another current debate in the *Concourse*: the role of feminism in Catholic orthodoxy. Feminist science fiction critics (and writers) have utilized the analogy of the human race facing a radically different sentient race which Europeans experienced in discovering the new world. Yet they maintain that the experience is far older: it is seen in the male discovery (or in some cases the denial) of the rationality of women. Women are from Venus, and men are not only from Mars, but suffer from Venus Envy.

The second point is the extent to which, before Columbus, medieval philosophers, particularly Scotus, discussed the possibility of other worlds. The whole debate, even in its theological wrinkles, is older than we might think.

So please, dear *Concourse* readers: help me out. I see nothing in Scripture or in Catholic doctrine to deny or even to make unlikely the existence of life on other worlds. Am I missing something? O.T., N.T., Ph.D. and S.T.D., phone home. ■

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